THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM (SHRI SHIVRAJ PATIL): (a) and (b) Indian Airlines has submitted a proposal to Government to increase its basic rupee fares on domestic sectors from 15% to 30% on different distance slabs to offset the increase in the cost of operations. The Indian Airlines domestic fares are amongst the lowest in the world.

(c) The Planning Commission has set up a high powered Committee to go into the fare and freight structure on domestic air services. The Committee is yet to submit its recommendations. Indian Airlines has also been advised from time to time to continue to undertake strict economy measures to keep expenditure under control.

Development of Salem Airport

321. SHRI V. GOPALSAMY:
SHRI T. R. BALU:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether any land has since been acquired for the proposed Salem Airport; if so, what is the area and location of land acquired and possession taken by the National Airport Authority;

(b) what would be the length of the runway;

(c) what are the types of planes which are likely to make use of this Airport;

(d) what is the estimated cost of construction; and how much funds have been released out of it, and how much has been so for spent; and

(e) by when the Airport is expected to be commissioned?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM (SHRI SHIVRAJ PATIL): (a) 130 acres of land at Kamalpuram has been acquired by the State Government. It would be transferred to the National Airports Authority after it has been developed by the State Authorities.

(b) and (c) The dimensions of the runway proposed will be 4500'x100', which would be suitable for AVRO type of aircraft.

(d) The cost of the project, excluding the cost of development and levelling of land, is estimated at Rs. 2.00 crores. A provision of Rs. 10.00 lakhs has been made in the Annual Plan 1989-90.

(e) Construction is planned to be completed in 12 months after the developed land is transferred to the National Airports Authority.

Introduction of direct flight between Madras and Mecca

322. SHRI V. GOPALSAMY:
SHRI T. R. BALU:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether Tamil Nadu Chief Minister wrote to the Central Government for introduction of direct flights between Madras and Mecca; and

(b) if so, what action has been taken thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM (SHRI SHIVRAJ PATIL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Air India will provide direct flights Madras/Bombay/Jeddah on the outward journey. Due to operational constraints in the return direction, the pilgrims will be travelling on charter flights from Jeddah to Bombay with immediate connection at Bombay on Air India's scheduled services.